



At The Table

USDA nutrition assistance news and information for partners and community organizations

Springing Forward

Winter/Spring 2010

USDA Food and
Nutrition Service
Midwest Region

- 2 *Let's Move! and HealthierUS School Challenge*
- 3 *Stimulus Funding Helps Pantry Clients*
- 4 *MN Vikings Promote Summer Meals*
- 5 *Profile: Midwest People's Garden Manager*
- 6 *SNAP Outreach to Seniors, Hispanics*
- 7 *USDA Team Promotes Farm to School*
- 8 *Peer Counseling Supports WIC Breastfeeding*
- 9 *Breakfast in Classroom Benefits Students*
- 10 *School Breakfast Week in Michigan*
- 11 *What's New at FNS*
- 12 *Farm to School Network Update*

Spring is a season of growth, and for the Food and Nutrition Service, the season's characteristic takes on a special significance. As a result of the economy, we have seen tremendous growth in participation in our programs. In response, all of us involved with nutrition programs—federal, state and local partners—are planting seeds for future growth and taking action to cultivate programs that respond to the present needs of our fellow Americans.

Here in the Midwest Region, much growth and many changes are underway, and our *At the Table* newsletter provides a snapshot of some of these changes. For starters, the Midwest People's Garden on Chicago's west side will be bigger and better this year. Seeding has already occurred and a planting day and work schedule are planned. Perhaps most exciting of all, our sponsoring partner, the Chicago Botanic Garden, plans to accept SNAP at a farmer's market that will debut at the garden. With this evolution, the Midwest People's Garden will move toward a sustainable project that will provide an influx of federal dollars and fresh, healthy produce to a food desert area.



The move by the Chicago Botanic Garden mirrors other efforts undertaken by USDA. As evidenced by recent grant announcements and other changes, we are encouraging farmers' markets to pursue authorization to accept SNAP EBT, which will grow support for local, sustainable agriculture and offer SNAP recipients more nutritious food.

Complementing this latest initiative is the rapid growth of farm to school efforts nationwide. As I write this, USDA's Farm to School Tactical Team is visiting successful sites across the country to identify best practices and barriers to the growth of farm to school systems. From St. Paul, Minnesota's efforts to buy locally raised meat to the Chicago Public Schools' purchase of over 200,000 peaches from Michigan growers, the farm to school movement is poised for rapid growth.

As you read this issue, you will learn about innovative projects and the people responsible for them. They improve our programs' ability to reduce hunger and improve nutrition for all of us. It is our state, local government, community and faith-based partners who make the Midwest a leader in innovation and service. Thanks for all that you do. Happy Spring!

Ollice Holden
FNS Midwest Regional Administrator

More Reasons to Take the HealthierUS School Challenge!

First Lady Puts Spotlight on Exercise, Healthier School Meals



In February 2010, First Lady Michelle Obama launched the *Let's Move!* campaign to move America towards a healthier generation of kids and to fight the childhood obesity epidemic (www.letsmove.gov/). Obesity has more than tripled in the last 30 years. For the first time ever, children might not live longer than their parents if the trends continue to grow. *Let's Move!* involves a comprehensive approach including making environments more conducive to healthy eating and empowering people to make healthier lifestyle choices. As part of this effort, Mrs. Obama calls upon schools to take the *HealthierUS School Challenge*.

Taking the challenge means increasing access to nutritious foods including a variety of vegetables, such as legumes and dark green

and bright orange vegetables, fruit, whole grains, and low-fat/skim milk options. It also means providing structured nutrition and physical education as part of the school day.

To help schools move towards being a HealthierUS School, USDA has increased the incentives for schools to apply!

Learn more about the HealthierUS School Challenge at:

www.fns.usda.gov/tn/HealthierUS/index.html



Choosing fresh fruit at Oehrli Elementary School (Montague, MI), a HealthierUS School Challenge Gold award winner in 2009.

Take a look at the changes USDA has made to *HealthierUS School Challenge* requirements:

- Removing the ADP (average daily participation) requirements for the Bronze level;
- Removing the requirement for production records for the Bronze Level;
- Expanding the program to Middle and High Schools;
- Easing ADP requirements for the Silver award: 60% for Middle and Elementary Schools and 45% for High Schools
- Easing paperwork requirements for multiple schools in **ONE** district that implement the **SAME** menus, competitive foods, school policies and practices
- Increasing certification from 2 years to 4 years
- Offering financial incentives for each school awarded:

\$2,000 Gold of Distinction

\$1,500 Gold

\$1,000 Silver

\$500 Bronze.

*By Samia Hamdan, MPH, RD
FNS Midwest Region*

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Submitted by the Oak Park and River Forest Food Pantry
Oak Park, Illinois

When you are hungry in Illinois, where do you turn?

For over 11,000 families in the Oak Park and River Forest (OPRF) area, that place of sustenance is the OPRF Food



Pantry. As part of the Illinois Emergency Food Assistance Program, OPRF Food Pantry steps in to feed local families in their time of crisis. Like most member agencies, we provide families with an emergency ration of food, striving to supply enough for three days worth of meals.

In 2009, we set a goal of boosting the nutritional make-up of the food we provide. Specifically, we committed to including two dairy products and two frozen meat products to all families as part of their 3-day supply of food. Yet providing even that minimal amount became more and more challenging as the year progressed. By June 2009 we had served 4,961 families. For the same time period in 2008, we had served 2,913 families. Could we continue to supply meat and dairy to exponentially

increasing numbers of families? Not without help.

Fortunately, the USDA provided a much needed boost. In July, our allotment of USDA commodities leaped from an average of 7,499 pounds to 12,137 pounds due to ARRA (American Recovery and Reinvestment Act) funds. So while we ended 2009 with a 63% increase in client visits, we also ended 2009 with a 58% increase in USDA allotments. The USDA allotment increase enabled us to continue providing quality, nutritious food



to everyone in need who came to us for help. Without those extra commodities, we would have been forced to eliminate dairy and meat products in favor of less costly cans of vegetables and soup.

The extra nutrition content of our food has not been lost on our clients. One of our clients recently remarked, "It helps people in need like myself have the food I can't afford to buy. The foods are very healthy for

the body." Another noted, "I am receiving food stamps, but I find it very hard to eat three meals on less than four dollars a day." Yet another commented that "the Pantry means a meal or no meal at all—and when you have odds and ends, the pantry helps fill in to make a meal for my family."

We could not have afforded to continue providing significant amounts of nutritious food to all our clients in 2009 without the increase in allotment of USDA commodities. One of our clients says it best: "Bless you and all the workers. I can sleep at night because my stomach is full."

Michele Zurakowski
Director of Operations
Paula Berg, Pantry Shift Manager
Kathy Russell, Executive Director
www.oprffoodpantry.org

Do you have a story about how ARRA nutrition funding has made a difference? Please send it to the FNS Midwest Region at:
publicaffairs@fns.usda.gov

For more information about ARRA funding for FNS programs, visit:
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns/recovery/default.htm>



[Return to Table of Contents](#)

MINNESOTA VIKINGS SUMMER LUNCH PROGRAM

Vikings Mini-Grants Boost Summer Feeding

In 2009 the Minnesota Vikings teamed up for the first time with the Second Harvest Heartland Food Bank in St. Paul and Hunger Solutions Minnesota to tackle child hunger and food insecurity in the summer in Minnesota.

With support from the Minnesota Department of Education, the partnership succeeded in expanding access to the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and feeding significantly more children than the summer before.

Before the Vikings partnership, only about 20% of the 270,000 Minnesota children who ate free and reduced price school meals participated in the SFSP. To help address this "summer nutrition gap," the Second Harvest Food Bank in St. Paul and Hunger Solutions Minnesota initiated a partnership with the Minnesota Vikings in 2009. The goal of the "Vikings Children's Fund Summer Lunch Program" partnership was to increase new SFSP sponsors and sites and summer meals served to Minnesota children. The Vikings Children's Fund awarded \$92,000 from the team's annual "Taste of the NFL" event, of which \$52,000 was for "mini-grants" to new and existing SFSP sponsors. The mini-grants helped new sponsors with start-up costs (e.g., purchasing a new cooler) and helped existing SFSP sponsors and sites expand their participation (e.g., enhanced programming and publicity). The remainder of the grant was used for outreach, marketing and other program costs.



Lunch at Vikings youth football camp, Minneapolis. Photo: Second Harvest Heartland

Thanks to the mini-grants and the tremendous publicity generated by the Vikings, 17 new SFSP sponsors and 44 new feeding sites joined the

SFSP last summer, and total summer meals served grew by 122,627 (almost nine percent over summer 2008). The mini-grants supported creative strategies for reaching more children. For example, one public school feeding site in Minneapolis used the funding to provide meals for parents and caregivers who accompanied the children. The family meal time option dramatically increased the number of participating children at that site (a 61% increase over the previous summer).

This year, the funding for the Vikings mini-grants will double to \$100,000, with additional support from Target. Second Harvest Heartland will be responsible for publicizing, awarding and administering the mini-grants statewide. Jenny Butcher, MDE SFSP Coordinator, notes, "Second Harvest Heartland

has been an important partner in fighting childhood hunger. The Vikings Children's Fund grant opportunity significantly increased awareness of the program and provided extra funding...for staff, equipment, transportation and activities. Second Harvest Heartland staff has promoted the program by contacting

potential sponsors...and developing marketing materials. We look forward to working with them again in 2010!"

For more information, contact fns@state.mn.us

"Having the ability to help provide proper nutrition to a child who may otherwise go without that life essential is the driving force behind the Minnesota Vikings continued support and participation in...the Summer Food Service Program."

*- Kimberly Fields
Director of Civic and Business Affairs
Minnesota Vikings*

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

A Green Inspiration:

Midwest People's Garden Manager Joan Hopkins



by Alan Shannon, FNS Midwest Region

When we think of the Midwest, we probably picture farms or rural landscapes. Our region has some of the richest, most productive farmland in the



world. Yet when we imagine the great cities of the Midwest...Detroit, Minneapolis, Chicago and others...we probably don't think of farms or agriculture.

Joan Hopkins, a young woman from Chicago's Garfield Park neighborhood, seeks to change that image—one garden, and one vegetable at a time.

Growing up in West Garfield Park, an historic neighborhood that she describes as a “food desert,” Joan stumbled into community gardening. “I needed a job and the whole city was going green,” she says. She enrolled in the Windy City Harvest Program, an education and training program of the Chicago Botanic Garden (CBG). The program, which provides instruction in sustainable horticulture and urban agriculture, appealed to Hopkins from the start.

Of particular appeal is the new Midwest People's Garden, which she manages (and where FNS employees volunteer - see sidebar). Located in the neighborhood where she grew up, the garden has given Hopkins an opportunity to make a difference in a community she loves. For the summer of 2010, the garden's second year, plans are well underway to create a garden of diverse and plentiful offerings that address nutritional needs and local preferences.

“It's my community and that's what I'm most proud of,” Hopkins explains. “I'm doing this for the community. This is my home.” The soft-spoken urban gardener has big plans for the coming season. The CBG and Hopkins plan to accept

SNAP (formerly food stamp) benefit cards at the site during twice-weekly markets. Customers can pick their own produce or choose from freshly harvested items. Hopkins and staff are planning cooking demonstrations and promotional events designed to transform the garden into a comprehensive and valued community institution.

“I want to bring that community up,” she says. “I'd love for people to start vegetable gardens in their own yards.” Hopkins also runs the CBG's Boot Camp program, where inmates at a west side prison can learn how to grow vegetables. Through her involvement with Windy City Harvest, Hopkins has acquired a passion for gardening and healthy eating. She longs to influence others to grow and eat vegetables, fruits and herbs. “I love that I can relate what I've learned to family and friends. If I catch their ear, they'll tell someone else.”

Hopkins also sees the bigger picture. Through the People's Garden, she explains, “we're trying to connect the dots between USDA and urban farming. And it should be just like that.” She reminds me of how USDA grades and stamps meat to ensure high quality. When I tell her that USDA is fortunate to have such an inspiring and knowledgeable People's Garden manager, she reverses the compliment. “USDA is putting its stamp of approval on my garden,” she explains. “And that means a lot to me.”

The Midwest People's Garden is a partnership between the FNS Midwest Region and the Chicago Botanic Garden (CBG). FNS employee volunteers help CBG staff plant, maintain and harvest the garden. USDA Secretary Vilsack announced the People's Garden initiative in 2009, calling upon USDA agencies to help support and promote community gardening. There were 124 USDA People's Gardens nationwide in 2009. To learn more, visit: www.usda.gov/wps/portal/?navid=PEOPLES_GARDEN

[Return to Table of Contents](#)



Helping Seniors and Hispanics Access SNAP

by Ann Eubank, Midwest Region
SNAP outreach coordinator

If it's a Friday in October and you follow the traffic to Mozart Park, you just might find yourself at one of the most popular events for seniors, especially Hispanic seniors, on Chicago's west side. That is the *Annual Senior Health and Government Benefit Fair* in Humboldt Park, sponsored by former Cook County Commissioner (now Alderman) Roberto Maldonado.

Since 2003, FNS has taken this opportunity to inform the 1,500 to 3,000 seniors and others who come to the fair about the benefits of food stamps (now called SNAP). About 75% of the fair's attendees are Hispanic. Seniors come by the busload from residential centers in the area. They line up when doors open in the morning for a day of free services in a festive atmosphere of music and fun. Services include health screenings, such as blood pressure checks and mammograms, and preventative measures like free flu shots. Seniors can also get a State ID on-site. And then there's a delicious free lunch, a drawing for door prizes, and to top it all off, free haircuts!

Seniors are often reluctant to apply for SNAP benefits. The fair offers a warm and inviting atmosphere where service is freely offered. FNS representatives try to do more than just provide information about SNAP, nutrition education, and other USDA nutrition



IDHS caseworkers join FNS staff at annual seniors fair in Chicago.

programs. We also enlist the help of two bilingual Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) caseworkers from the nearest local office to offer on-site SNAP application services.

The IDHS caseworkers answer eligibility questions, prescreen for eligibility, and take anywhere from 15 to 30 or more applications from seniors at each event. They also hand out many applications to seniors who prefer to fill one out in the privacy of their homes.

For the last three years, FNS has been fortunate to have

bilingual SNAP staff member Maribell Cerda at this event. Maribell makes sure everyone has SNAP, My Pyramid, and "Golden Diners" (low-cost or free senior meals) information in their language and engages any senior who shows interest. FNS and IDHS staff have formed an excellent partnership to reach the underserved senior Hispanic population at this unique event.

Reaching Seniors and Hispanics/Latinos

In 2006, approximately 2 million seniors (60 years of age or older) received food stamp (SNAP) benefits, or 9 percent of total participants. The SNAP participation rate for seniors in 2005 was 30 percent. Only one-third of eligible seniors participate in SNAP.

In 2006, about 56 percent of people in SNAP-eligible households with a Hispanic head participated in the program. People in Hispanic-headed households represent a more than one-quarter of eligible people who do not participate.

FNS has compiled "Promising Practices" to help eligible senior citizens and Hispanics apply for SNAP benefits:

www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/pdfs/pp-seniors.pdf

www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/pdfs/pp-hispanics.pdf

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Farm to School Team.....Linking School Cafeterias and Local Farmers

In September 2009, USDA Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan announced the *Farm to School* initiative, (www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/F2S/Default.htm), a key component of USDA's *Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food* initiative. The goal of *Farm to School* is to better connect children to the food they eat and create opportunities for local farmers to sell their products to schools in their communities.



Enjoying local farm apples. Photo: Worcester (MA) Telegram and Gazette

- Maintain a *Farm to School* website with resources, best practices, and guidance for schools who have not yet started *Farm to School* activities or want to expand existing efforts;

- Use site visit information to analyze trends and identify obstacles to the success of *Farm to School* activities;

In response, the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) has created a "Farm to School Team," led by Child Nutrition Division representative Loren LaCorte. Two staff from USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service and four from FNS are on the core team, including Midwest Region representative John Kwit. Other staff, including one from each FNS Regional Office, comprise the resource team. The purpose of the Team is to support local and regional food systems by facilitating linkages between schools and their local food producers. The team will:

- Identify nine sites with varied demographics and characteristics, in order to conduct field work;

webinars to share *Farm to School* obstacles and successes.

In December 2009, the core team made an exploratory visit to Delaware's Woodbridge School District to study the district's *Farm to School* efforts. Several factors have contributed to the district's success, including a supportive superintendent and strong partnerships. For the past three years, the district has partnered with the Delaware Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association and State Department of Education to facilitate the purchase of fresh local produce. In addition, the high school's



USDA Deputy Secretary Merrigan (on right) joins JoAnne Berkenkamp of the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy at a November 2009 *Farm to School* forum. (St. Paul, MN)

See page 12 for more information on "Farm to School" from the *National Farm to School Network*.

unique agri-science curriculum combines textbook learning with hands-on experience in running a farm, including a garden and a barn with cows and sheep.

From April through June 2010, the *Farm to School* Team will tour America's school cafeterias and farms to identify challenges and opportunities to help schools transition to purchasing more local foods. For comments or questions related to *Farm to School*, please contact the Farm to School Team at farmtoschool@fns.usda.gov.

by John Kwit
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[Return to Table of Contents](#)

WIC Peer Counseling: a Lifeline for Breastfeeding Moms



The Women, Infant and Children (WIC) program promotes breastfeeding as the optimal method of infant feeding. In 2004, FNS' "Loving Support" initiative expanded the breastfeeding initiative through peer counseling programs. These programs recruit, hire and train women who currently breastfeed their own babies or have past experience with breastfeeding.

Peer counselors provide valuable information and support to pregnant, breastfeeding and postpartum WIC participants during and outside of clinic hours and sometimes outside the WIC clinic environment. Here are two extraordinary stories that prove what peer counseling can achieve.

Polk County, Wisconsin WIC

Rebecca and her son had difficulty beginning breastfeeding. Her son would not latch and required the use of a nipple shield for over a month. Rebecca had to pump and cup feed her son following breastfeeding for five weeks. There were times that I thought for sure this mom had had it and would quit breastfeeding. One day Rebecca called the peer counselor and reported that her son had started latching without the nipple shield -- she was ecstatic and so was I. Finally she began to enjoy breastfeeding her son without all of the complications.

Three weeks later, Rebecca had to return to work. Most weeks consisted of at least three 15 hour days, plus several eight hour shifts! As challenging and devastating as it was for Rebecca to return to work, financially she knew there was no other way. Faithfully she excused herself 6-7 times a day to pump milk. Although the schedule wasn't easy, she felt connected with her son and happy to meet her goal of exclusively feeding breast milk. Rebecca also attended our local breastfeeding support group and gained a lot of wisdom and encouragement from the other women. Her child is eight months and she is experiencing some difficulty pumping, but she is still breastfeeding and supplying only breast milk. This mom would not have overcome all of these obstacles if it weren't for the support we are able to offer her at WIC.

Angela Chivers, Lead Peer Counselor, Polk County WIC Program, is in her 3rd year of peer counseling. She is honored to be a part of the program.



Dodge County, Wisconsin WIC

Raquel had twin girls four years ago. She tried breastfeeding but it was too painful and she did not have the patience to breastfeed. She ended up feeding the babies formula. Now with her new pregnancy, she was unsure if she wanted to breastfeed again. During her pregnancy she was open-minded about the breastfeeding information WIC provided. When her baby was first born she was only breastfeeding a few times during the day and mainly supplementing with formula. Raquel informed me that she felt she did not have enough breast milk.

WIC offered to do a home visit and discovered that the problem was just the opposite; Raquel was producing too much milk and the baby was having trouble latching on. Raquel felt frustrated when the baby would cry and not latch on so she would offer formula. After the peer counselor advised her on how to improve her breastfeeding, Raquel agreed to start breastfeeding more and offering less formula. The peer counselor worked with Raquel for about a month and a half, and after all the despair and frustrations, Raquel was able to stop offering formula and exclusively breastfeed. It was very gratifying to know that with the right guidance and Raquel's perseverance, we now have a healthy baby being exclusively breastfed.

by Marvella Puga - Breastfeeding Peer Counselor, Dodge County WIC Program

To learn more, visit www.fns.usda.gov/wic/

[Return to Table of Contents](#)



School Breakfast: Strategies beyond the Bell

Many of us know the tremendous benefits a nutritious breakfast has on a child's health and well-being. Research tells us that when kids eat breakfast, their grades, vocabulary skills, memory, and behavior improve. Diets are more nutritious when children eat breakfast at school, and in some cases, obesity rates are lower among children who eat school breakfast.

Moving breakfast from the lunchroom to the classroom is an excellent way to ensure more students have access to school breakfast. Thanks to great leadership and partnerships at local, State, and federal levels, many schools are moving breakfast "beyond the bell" and into the classroom so all students can start the day ready to learn.

Michigan State Superintendent Mike Flanagan noticed that the majority of schools operated the School Breakfast Program, but breakfast participation was far lower than at lunch. In response, he issued the *Michigan School Breakfast Challenge*, calling on schools to increase breakfast participation by 50%. Many schools responded by implementing strategies like breakfast in the classroom and "Universal Free Breakfast" (where all students eat free). Flanagan also implemented a policy allowing breakfast in the classroom to coincide with instructional time. Through a partnership with the United

Dairy Industry of Michigan and promotional efforts, school breakfast participation increased 12% statewide in just one year.



In December 2008, only five Chicago Public Schools (CPS) offered Breakfast in the Classroom (BIC). But thanks to CPS's efforts to implement "Universal Free Breakfast" in all schools and BIC in elementary schools, 181 CPS schools now offer BIC (see sidebar). That translates to over 120,000 breakfasts and 25,000 pounds of fruit served each day to children. That's pretty impressive!

Other States and local districts have also recognized the importance of expanding access to school breakfast. Indiana State Superintendent Tony Bennett issued a policy last fall advising schools that breakfast could coincide with classroom instructional time. Universal Free Breakfast in the Classroom has also been implemented in the Milwaukee Public Schools since 2006-2007.

The data on BIC is profound, but so are the stories and supportive statements by teachers, principals, custodians, and students. "I love it. It's quick and alleviates the transition from the lunchroom to the classroom," said the principal at Morgan Elementary School in Chicago. Perhaps the most telling is a statement by a Chicago third grader: "Eating breakfast with my friends in the classroom is awesome!"

By Samia Hamdan, MPH, RD
FNS Midwest Region

Starting the Day Right in Chicago

Quick Facts.....

181 Chicago Public Schools now serve Breakfast in the Classroom (BIC).

Average daily breakfast participation at BIC schools has increased from 23% to 68%

School Outcomes...

Whitney Elementary reported a 2.2% decrease in absences, translating to an entire classroom of empty seats that are now filled.

Pulaski Elementary's tardy sign-in sheet used to be filled with 2-3 pages of student names each day. That has been reduced to less than a half page.

Field Elementary met their goal of feeding 330 breakfasts (88% of students!) every day for the week after implementation, nearly tripling the average meals served prior to BIC.

What people are saying...

"This program is a great way to help the struggling families... feed their children. It's giving everyone an opportunity to eat." *Lunchroom Manager, Morton Elementary*

"The program has done a lot for our students' ability to function in class. I can say all of our students are now nourished...(and) we have no complaints from teachers. We have doubled the number of students we now feed during breakfast." *Assistant Principal, Curtis Elementary*

Update: CPS Nutrition Services

[Return to Table of Contents](#)



School Breakfast Week

Students Get a Healthy Start in Lincoln Park, Michigan

On March 10, students at Lafayette School in Lincoln Park, Michigan celebrated School Breakfast Week (March 8-12) with breakfast in their classrooms and an all-school assembly featuring two Detroit Lions football players and team mascot “Roary the Lion.” Special guests from USDA, the Michigan Department of Education, Food Research and Action Center, Center for Civil Justice, United Way, and United Dairy Industry of Michigan got a warm welcome.

The Lincoln Park Schools were chosen as the site of Michigan’s School Breakfast Week event because of the district’s exceptional efforts to

increase participation in the School Breakfast Program. In November 2009, the district won a Gold Award in the first year of Michigan Superintendent Michael Flanagan’s two-year *School Breakfast Challenge*. The Lincoln Park Schools increased breakfast participation last school year by 105% over the previous year by implementing a “Universal Breakfast Program” (where all students eat free) in three of its schools. This school year, three more schools are offering free breakfast in the classroom.

Lincoln Park teachers and administrators are very enthusiastic about Universal Breakfast. They say eating breakfast in the classroom helps students focus on learning and has a calming effect. It

also decreases tardiness. The students learn quickly how to clean up so there is no mess. One teacher remarked, “I had no idea before we began this program that my students were so hungry. This program is terrific!”



Retired All-Pro Detroit Lions lineman Luther Ellis (pictured) and All-Pro Lions kicker Jason Hanson talked to the students about why breakfast is important.



USDA Food and Nutrition Service Deputy Administrator Audrey Rowe and Lions’ mascot “Roary” lead a “Ready, Set Go” cheer for School Breakfast Week. Rowe recognized MI Superintendent Flanagan, Lincoln Park Superintendent Randall Kite and Foodservice Director Mark Rodriguez for their efforts to increase access to school breakfast. She also thanked United Dairy Industry of Michigan for its generous support of the School Breakfast Challenge.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

What's New in the FNS Nutrition Assistance Programs

Update on Child Nutrition Programs Reauthorization

On March 24, the Senate Agriculture Committee approved legislation to reauthorize and reform the Child Nutrition and WIC Programs. The bill, which now moves to the full Senate, includes a number of important provisions to address child hunger and increase access to FNS nutrition programs. Some key provisions include improving nutrition standards for school meals; training and certification of school foodservice workers; establishing nutrition standards for all foods sold in schools ("competitive foods"); promoting WIC breastfeeding; and expansion of direct certification of students for school meals. USDA continues to urge support for a strong bill that supports the President's \$10 billion budget request.

TANF Stimulus Funds Available to Increase Summer Meals Participation

The USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) and the Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families (ACF) are collaborating to help communities provide meals to children through the Summer Food Service Program. On March 24, FNS and ACF notified their state agencies that TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) funding under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act may be used to cover portions of unreimbursed costs of running a summer meals site. Eligible expenses include staff supervision and programming for summer meals sites, transportation of food and children to feeding sites, meal preparation costs and recreational activities for children. For more information on the TANF Emergency Contingency Fund, go to: www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofa/

FDPIR: Another Successful Year for Nutrition Education on Indian Reservations

Congratulations to the FDPIR (Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations) Midwest Region Nutrition Committee! For the third year in a row, the committee was awarded a Food Distribution Program Nutrition Education Grant (FDPNE) to develop nutrition education projects reaching over 8,000 households. The committee will continue its successful work in developing a 2011 Calendar and Nutrition Guide, lettuce and radish seed packets with *MyPyramid* messages, and a Cultural Activity and Nutrition Guide Book for children.



Midwest FDPIR committee members. Left to right: Pat Roberts, Peggy Bazant, Milisa Corbine, Betty Jo Graveen, Samia Hamdan.

Committee members will also conduct site visits to other FDPIR centers to teach their peers how to conduct nutrition education with clients. The committee has just printed the *Live Healthy! Live Native!* recipe book and nutrition guide, supported by the previous year's FDPNE Grant. The guide includes nutrition information and culturally appropriate recipes using USDA Foods. The Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe Reservation and the Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin also secured 2010 FDPNE grants for projects that will promote healthy lifestyles among FDPIR participants on each reservation. Way to go!

View the new recipe book at: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cga/newsletters/mwro-cookbook-2009.pdf>

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Farm to School Network: *Planting the Seeds*

Farm to School -- By the Numbers



In 1997, there were only six programs in the U. S.

In 2002, there were 400 programs

In 2006, there were 1000 programs

In 2010, over 2,000 programs and growing

States with Farm to School Program: 43

States with Farm to School Policy: 24

Children in schools with "Farm to School" programs eat 1 additional serving of fruits and vegetables a day. (Healthier options in the cafeteria through farm to school meals result in an average increase of one serving of fruits and vegetables per day, including at home.)

For every dollar spent on local foods in schools, one to three dollars circulate in the local economy. (Farm to School programs can open up the expansive school food market, estimated at more than \$12 billion a year, to socially disadvantaged farmers.)

1 Day of School Lunches Served: 31 million children

1 in 3 children: overweight or obese

1 in 3 children: will be diabetic in their lifetime

Farm to School: priceless

Potential Benefits: Farm to School Programs

- Strengthen children's and communities' knowledge about, and attitudes toward, agriculture, food, nutrition and the environment.
- Increase children's participation in school meals and consumption of fruits and vegetables, thereby improving nutrition, reducing hunger, and preventing obesity and related diseases.
- Benefit school food budgets, after start-up, if planning and menu choices are made consistent with seasonal availability of fresh and minimally processed whole foods.
- Support economic development across numerous sectors and promote job creation.
- Increase market opportunities for farmers, fishers, ranchers, food processors and food manufacturers.
- Decrease distance between producers and consumers, thus promoting food security while reducing emissions of greenhouse gases and reliance on oil.

Taking Root: 5th National Farm to Cafeteria Conference

May 17-19, 2010, Detroit, MI

To learn more, visit:

www.farmtocafeteriaconference.org/

*submitted by Debra Eschmeyer,
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www.farmtoschool.org

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

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